

FIELD

L'amour de Pierrot



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DÉPOSÉ DANS TOUS LES PAYS

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EDITORS *Stuart Friebert*
 David Young

ASSOCIATE *John Hobbs*
EDITORS *Thomas Lux*
 Alberta Turner

BUSINESS *Anne Rossi*
MANAGER

COVER *Steve Farkas*

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It has come to our attention that one of the Jean Follain prose poems in Number 11 previously appeared in *Ironwood*. Our apologies to that magazine and to our readers.

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SNOW

If we, as we are, are dust, and dust, as it will, rises,
Then we will rise, and recongregate
In the wind, in the cloud, and be their issue,

Things in a fall in a world of fall, and slip
Through the spiked branches and snapped joints of the
 evergreens,
White ants, white ants and the little ribs.

SELF-PORTRAIT IN 2035

The root becomes him, the road ruts
That are sift and grain in the powderlight
Recast him, sink bone in him,
Blanket and creep up, fine, fine:

Worm-waste and pillow tick; hair
Prickly and dust-dangled, his arms and black shoes
Unlinked and laceless, his face false
In the wood-rot, and past pause . . .

Darkness, erase these lines, forget these words.
Spider recite his one sin.

MORANDI'S BOTTLES

I'm talking about stillness, the hush
Of a porcelain center bowl, a tear vase, a jug.

I'm talking about space, which is one-sided,
Unanswered, and left to dry.

I'm talking about paint, about shape, about the void
These objects sentry for, and rise from.

I'm talking about sin, red drop, white drop,
Its warp and curve, which is blue.

I'm talking about bottles, and ruin,
And what we flash at the darkness, and what for . . .

A COTTAGE IN THE WOOD

He has built himself a cottage in a wood, near where the insect rubs its wings in song.

Yet, without measure, or proper sense of scale, he has made the cottage too small. He realizes this when only his hand will fit through the door. He tries the stairs to the second floor with his fingers, but his arm wedges in the entrance. He wonders how he will cook his dinner. He might get his hands through the kitchen windows. But even so, he will not be able to cook enough on such a tiny stove.

He shall also lie unsheltered in the night, even though a bed with its covers turned down waits for him in the cottage.

He lies down and curls himself around the cottage, listening to the insect that rubs its wings in song.

THE NATIVE

Should we take a trip? said father.

Then be prepared for foreigners who suddenly turn out to be the natives, which turns us into foreigners as we enter their country, said mother.

No no, I will stay home, and when those foreign natives come here I'll stick my tongue out at them and say I am the native; and this is my father- and motherland (they are married), and we do not like no foreigners telling us what to do; so take your funny talk home, cried father.

And then they will think you provincial and closed, lacking any universality, said mother.

No no, I will say, I love foreigners because they live in foreign lands, which I understand are at great distances; and as distance makes the heart grow fonder, please go away as far as your distant lands allow — not too far, because the earth is round, and you're liable to start encroaching on my father- and motherland (God married them, and we are their children). Now get out of our house because you're liable to get your foreignness on our personal things — get out, get out! screamed father.

No no, father, hospitality is the mark of one truly at home in his own house, said mother.

Yes yes, I will say, come into my home and put your foreignness all over my things. I want your foreign hair in my comb; I want your foreign spittle all over my toothbrush; I beg you to talk your funny foreign talk, to make fun of me in your funny foreign noise, screamed father.

Now they're probably beginning to like you, even if they do think you a little quaint, perhaps even a little stupid; perhaps it's your openness that disgusts them; no one respects a man who doesn't first respect himself, said mother.

So they don't want to be regular guys — okay, out, out,

you dirty foreigners; out of my house, out of my country, off my earth, out of my solar system, out of my galaxy, out of my cosmos — out, out, out, out! roared father.

THE HAND SQUEEZING

An old woman marries a young infant.

She is dressed in white; he in a formal black diaper.

They stand before the minister; she leans on a cane, the bridegroom lies on a pillow being held by his nurse, screaming.

Rice is thrown; and they are driven away on their honeymoon.

Oh, how perfectly beautiful, weeps the mother of the groom.

Her husband squeezes her hand.

Don't do that, that hurts! she screams.

He says, I didn't mean to hurt you, I only meant to make a gesture of solidarity, that, whereas we have lost our son to the most normal longing that a young man can have, still, we have each other . . .

That doesn't give you any reason to hurt me! she screamed.

But dear, I didn't mean to hurt you; honestly, honey . . .

THE WINDOWS OF THE CASTLE

The King was being chased by the Queen. When one looked up at the castle windows one saw a fat little man wearing a crown running from window to window with dishes sailing after him.

The King finally locks himself in the Queen Mother's bedroom, and telephones the Minister of War.

Hello hello, I want to declare war against the Queen — yes yes, bring up troops and cannon, cried the King — and by the way, have you seen my mother?

This *is* your mother, said the minister of war.

I didn't know you were in charge of the troops, mother, said the King.

I'm in charge of the kingdom! — Am I not, weakling? said his mother.

Mama, this is Albert; don't you remember me? Why are you calling me *weakling*? said the King.

Weakling!

The King hung up. I must have had the wrong number, there's no *weakling* here; only Albert, the king, in his mother's bedroom, alone and frightened. Soon the Queen'll break in and beat me up.

Then the King telephoned the Royal Executioner.

Hello hello, I want the Queen beheaded at once — and by the way, have you seen my mother?

This *is* your mother, said the Royal Executioner.

I didn't know you were in charge of executing people, mother, said the King.

I'm in charge of the kingdom! — Am I not, weakling? said his mother.

But, mama, this is Albert; why are you calling me *weakling*? said the King.

Weakling!

The King hung up. I wonder who *weakling* is? said the King, I keep getting his mother on the line.

Meanwhile the Queen has broken in, and if one were to look up at the castle windows he would see a fat little man wearing a crown running from window to window with dishes flying after him . . .

SUPPER

You must eat all your soup, that's how you get strong.

Eat that soupie, stop playing with it!

Or else you'll be weak and you won't grow up.

And that'll be your fault.

If it comes to that, towns and nations are to blame when they
don't grow up.

I blame small towns for not becoming cities. Their tough luck.

I blame little nations for not growing powerful. Their tough
luck.

Accuso le piccole nazioni. . .

Ich beschuldige die kleinen Nationen. . .

J'accuse les petites nations. . .

So bolt that soup, before it turns to ice!

translated by David Young

ON SISYPHUS

Not able to keep the stone rolling —
stone, whatever it was, maybe gneiss, maybe paper,
I concluded it was my fault.
And the important thing about faults is that they can be
corrected,
my mamma used to say.

So I concluded it was my fault.
And gave the stone
a little more of myself. Whatever it was,
maybe hate, maybe love.
And now things went better. For

there was the certainty that it
eventually
would break my neck.

translated by Friederike Snyder

ON DAEDALUS

Daedalus is puttering around his labyrinth.
The walls keep multiplying.
There's no escape.
Just wings.

But all around — so many Icaruses! The air is black with them.
In the towns, the fields, on the plateaus.
In airport lobbies / automatic
goodbyes /;
In the Space Control Center / metempsychosis
by semiconductor /;
On the playground / groups of student conscripts
class of 1960 /;
In the museum / the blond beards
floating up /;
On the ceiling / a fleck of rainbow
imagination /;
In the marshes / baying in the night,
class of 1640 /;
In the stone / the pleistocene finger,
pointing up /.

Time full of Icaruses.
Air full of Icaruses.
Spirit full of Icaruses.

Ten billion Icaruses
minus one
But look, Daedalus still
hasn't invented
the wings.

BRIEF MEDITATION ON THE BUTCHERING OF CARP

You take a mallet
and a knife
and hit
the right spot so it doesn't flop because
flopping causes complications and lowers profit.

The people watching squint their eyes, admire your skill,
reach for their money. And the paper is ready
for wrapping. And smoke rises from chimneys.
Christmas gapes out from the windows, spreads along the
ground
and splashes in vats.

Such is the Law of Happiness.

But I wonder, is the carp really the right animal?

Because a much better animal would be one
which — stretched out — kept flat — pinned down —
fixed its blue eye
on the mallet, the knife, the money, the paper
the people and chimneys
and Christmas.

And quickly
Said something. For example

These are my best days, these are my golden days.

or

Starry skies above me and moral law in me.

or

And it *is* turning.

Or at least

Hallelujah!

BRIEF MEDITATION ON EYES

Goddesses, gods, fear and Twiggy all have very big eyes.

Some gods have such big eyes there's nothing left over and God
resembles an eye.

So the eye sees all, knows all and bestows gifts which would
exist without the Eye, but are much better with the Eye.

Cyclopes, monster newts, spies and angels of the apocalypse
have very small eyes. But a lot of them.

One little eye in each keyhole!

Some angels and their equals, whom we don't think of as
monster newts, have such small eyes there's no place in
them for even a particle of man.

They lower their eyes to keep secrets.

Behind our eyes nerves reach into the brain where certain areas
correspond to the parts of the retina.

Behind very big eyes, there's nothing.

Behind very small eyes, the apocalypse.

translated by Stuart Frieibert

LANDSCAPE

Nothing can oppose the cloud.
Nothing can oppose the gray
that sponges up the rust
off the old grass,
unless it is the stone
of its own color
in the tower
where the windows webbed over
are less open than its padlocked door.

It is not the gray birds
it is not the talons of birds
it is not the weather
or the trees that play dead
or the gray eyes of an old woman
or the children who are watching the ground
for sticks.

See what is coming —
a landscape where we take in turn
what is bleak and empty.
You do not comprehend yourself
until someone steps to you,
grateful you are carrying that lantern.

AN AGE

There is a growth that hurts the child
one was, the child who still knew
the ocean rock from a distance,
flocked like cloth, white like sugar,
a flower out of focus in the waves —

the waves, the thousands of horizons
seen again and again as blue Japan —
something that changes the freighters
twined with lights and evergreen
in the port of Seattle.

I remember being nowhere in the early light,
half-way over ocean to a north-bound freighter
and walking back to my sister
where our white wood caught fire
in the white sand.

THE COCKLES

The cockles are at the last flat leavings
of this tide; sad mud that hangs on thongs,
that knocks rowboats on one side.

The starfish sucks from the affinities
of moonsnails under moon; learns,
as the day floats over the quiet,
when to let things slide. From touch

one thing begins. All things begin.

The cockles are shoes for your unicorn,
a personal remembrance from your moon,
here from the garden of beliefs,
a garland of shells to circle ourselves.

OUT THE DOOR

Good morning,
you are with the snow in the branches
with a life of beauty, liberty and peril.
Measures of snow will drop off like babies
to a lullaby, branches will toss without wind,
far into the day, into good evening. Then,
at best, you are shadowed not by the planet,
but by a single leaf or a single hair.

Goat hair is coarse, short, close
to the skull, the upholstery of a chair.
You did snap shut your purse at the aviary,
at the carving in an ivory horn, a brittle
price and a brittle beak and a brittle tusk.

Sing around the corner, mornings,
crane around in a gown with perfect stitches.
The birds are invisible, in another shell, and
a waterfall beats with a heart's obligation.
If there is anything to willingly care for,
it is the candle in the hand of the gown,
buoyant and stubborn in a starless passageway,
something never overcome as it would overcome.

ANXIETY AND ASHES

The green moths flex
their luminous wings
and in the drawer
anxiety eats a dress
a winter glove
then circles a hanging globe
like a memory.

It is still as a rock
dropped in the water;
the river swarms and parts
then swarms away.

Already today is shorter.
Two sticks
make a building.
Four sticks
make a door.
Five sticks
make a window
but one stick
fears in its heart.

I will take this candle,
burn the seed in my heart.
Ash will sprout
as the ash from the candle
in the seed's heart.

Nothing I grow
will be more than an ash —
ashes from the laughter
of the oldest ashes.

The match laughs
at the joke of the body,
nudges the wick,
and laughs.

PROSE POEM FOR MY BROTHER AND FOR MY
TEACHER GREGORY

"We suffer from the repression of the sublime."

—Roberto Assagioli

This sculptured, open box of mahogany (ivory-white inside) is strung both with vertical and horizontal layers of musical wires that sing when struck, and bits of bright, coke rock tremble at the intersects. These gems flash in the candle light, and before me all my beloved childhood looms in the humming levels, each one deeper, older than the other. I tip this artist's box and my child laughs and moves there in his own time. You will hear me moan: oh, you will hear me moan with all the sure pleasure of what I thought I'd lost come back again. Why, we have never left our home!

On the leather lace fixed about my neck blue, yellow, red, brown and black glass African trading beads begin to glow: their colors all weave and newly flow like translucent and angelic worms together, and beneath these my neck is as alive with gentle, white bees as is a woman's breast.

Beside and in the light river, figures come on stage exactly as they are needed. I tell you, I conduct my own act! A boy poises so youngly, so beautifully, his arms a graceful arrow over his brown head, and he dives. His limbs and body push supple as a whole school of fish. And then his vacant place is taken by another, a man in denim and in boots of red rubber. He is wrenched from the shore and pulled through the fresh, busy stream by a kid who tugs on one of his hands and holds a fishing rod. And, too, this man's dragged in the opposite direction by a dog on a leash shaking his wet coat into the stippled light. That man sashayed: he zigzagged this way and that. The man is me!

You see! A blue jay does a dance for me! He hops beside a tree that rises inside myself. He half-glides, his iridescent, blue back striking like a brush of Gauguin on the bare canvas of the air. And then he flies, having left behind a perfect feather which I find shades from blue into brown — as my brother's color into mine. Now in the single space the diver and the booted fellow left, my brother and I are there, fishing together, our poles glinting in the water, and my mouth moves. My eyes are alive! I cry to him with joy. That blue jay was a messenger of what I want.

My friend, my guide Gregory on this voyage seems benign. He brushes my chest and my stretched, naked arms, open to the sun, with a branch of fragrant pine. "Be healed," he chants with each glancing stroke, "Be healed." The needles prick my skin back into life, and I go down to bathe my feet in the stream. The blue veins form a mottled web along my white heel. I can feel my kinship with the pine, the jay, the luminescent stream and with him. Or is he *her* — the Mother? Gregory, my oracle, my teacher. He leans there in the door of our cabin by the river, his face glowing, hair long and shining as a woman's, his belly fat with life. He is pregnant with the two of us: my brother and I, unborn twins who lie entangled in each other's developing limbs. Soon we will be born! He and I will taste of milk for the very first time! And of strawberry pop, and of bright bananas. And we will eat, my brother and I, a great, shining, autumn-red apple fallen from our father's tree as if from the long sky. And you, too, will taste this apple with us. Let us all embrace, for we all have the same mother, and her name is Grace.

PASSAGE

In autumn in this same life
I was leaving a capital
where an old animal
captured in its youth
one that in the wild
would never have reached such an age
was watching the sun set
over nameless
unapproachable trees
and it is spring

THE HOUR

As a sentry before the watch begins
something of me is at home far away
not alone

through a day of cloud late in the year
I remain a bell in sunlight
knowing the hour

THE STRUCTURE OF GALWAY KINNELL'S
THE BOOK OF NIGHTMARES

Writing about Galway Kinnell's long poem, I feel as I imagine I might feel if I were lecturing about *Paradise Lost* with John Milton in the back of the hall. Why doesn't everybody just turn around and ask *him*? In fact, Kinnell has said some helpful things about the structure of *The Book of Nightmares* (e.g. in the *Ohio Review* interview, Fall 1972) — and may say more. But I suppose, like other poets, he will leave a great deal unsaid. This, of course, is not coyness or obstinacy. When another person comments on a poem, we see that commentary as illuminating or not illuminating, right on certain points and wrong on others, etc. But no one sees it as the last word, equivalent to the poem itself. We always assume there is more to be said as the complexities of the poem take different configurations for other readers. But when a poet speaks about his own work, the statements sound with an uncomfortable finality. Who can dispute the man himself? And whenever a reading is taken as final, the poem is diminished.

I believe the best place to begin with a work as large as *The Book of Nightmares* is its structure. When the architecture of the book begins to come clear, when we have a confident sense of the movement of individual parts and the development of the whole poem as the parts build on each other, then there will be time to look more closely at recurring details or motifs, at variations of tone, at the texture of allusions, or at literary parallels. Certainly there will be things to be said about mythological elements. A glance at Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* draws to the surface countless pieces of myth in the poem: the road of trials through rocks and mountains, the helpful crone, the death of self, the descent into the underworld, the hero united with his missing female half, etc. But to begin with, what are the parts and how do they fit together?

I propose to look first at the structure of Poem I, "Under the Maud Moon," in the belief that the structure of that poem is analogous, in a backwards way, to the structure of the whole book. I will go on, then, to the overall movement of the book and then back to look at several other individual poems in the context of the whole.

The first section of "Maud Moon" is a desolate one. It establishes the scene — Kinnell following a mountain path, lighting a fire, remembering a woman. (The speaker calls himself Kinnell.) Almost every detail reiterates a sense of brokenness, separation. He imagines tramps before him "unhouseling themselves on cursed bread." The tramps are doing the reverse of what the Eucharist intends; they are breaking themselves off from the sacred. So, too, with other details in this section. The woman is absent and Kinnell's hands hold only the empty space. The limbs, longing for the universe, snap, their embrace torn. The oath that made the universe one, holding together earth and water, flesh and spirit, is broken — resworn and broken over and over. Maud is not mentioned in this first section, nor is the song. The wholeness or oneness of the world is noticed only in its absence.

In the second section, the scene is the same — Kinnell is alone by the small fire in the rain. But he moves both back and forward in time, thinking back, by way of his singing, to the songs he used to croak for his daughter in her nightmares and forward to the bear out ahead of him, the one he will see later, nodding from side to side, eating flowers, his fur glistening in the rain. All three of the elements here, his daughter Maud, the bear, and the song, tend to bring some unity to the desolate brokenness of the first section. The child is closer than she will ever be again to the underlife, the "underglimmer of the beginning"; the bear moves with his own motion, perfectly at home among the blossom-smells on the rained earth; and the song, a love-note, "like the coyote's bark, curving off, into a howl,"

may bring us as close as we can come, with our torn speech, to a unison with the natural world.

The restorative elements are present again, and less hesitantly, in section 3. It moves back, in present tense now, to Maud waking in her crib. Throughout the section she is associated with plants, flowers: her hair sprouts out, her gums bud for her first spring, her green swaddlings tear and the blue flower opens. She is torn from the primal oneness, to be sure, but she is still natural, linked with flowers as the bear was in section 2. At the end of this section, she reaches into her father's mouth, to take hold of his song, to learn from him a second-best way toward wholeness.

Section 4, the center one of the seven sections, is crucial to the movement of "Maud Moon." (This tends to be true of each of the poems; to understand its structure, notice the movement into and away from its fourth section.) Here Kinnell takes us back to wholeness, the child in the womb, flipping and over-leaping, "somersaulting alone in the oneness under the hill." Here, for a while, the place is her own; she presses a knee or elbow along a slippery wall, "sculpting the world with each thrash." And the song she hears is not words spoken from mouth to ear but the stream of omphalos blood humming all about her. Effortlessly, she is the song. Without losing the gaiety, the comedy, of the child somersaulting "under the old, lonely bellybutton," Kinnell can slip in a phrase like "in remembrance," which must bring to mind Christian communion; inconspicuously he links the womb-leaping with the sacramental bread. Here flesh and spirit are put together — as they were not for the unhouseled tramps in section 1.

A passage from Kinnell's essay "Poetry, Personality, and Death" (*Field*, Spring 1971, pp. 68-9) makes plain how much emphasis he intends to place on "the oneness under the hill":

What do we want more than that oneness which bestows — which *is* — life? We want only to be more alive, not less. And the standard of what it is to be alive is very high. It was set in our infancy. Not yet

divided into mind and body, our mind still a function of our senses, we laughed, we felt joyous connection with the things around us. In adult life don't we often feel half-dead, as if we were just brains walking around in corpses? The only sense we still respect is eyesight, probably because it is so closely attached to the brain. Go into any American house at random, you will find something — a plastic flower, false tiles, some imitation panelling — *something* which can be appreciated as material only if apprehended by eyesight alone. Don't we go sight-seeing in cars, thinking we can experience a landscape by looking at it through glass? A baby takes pleasure in seeing a thing, yes, but seeing is a first act. For fulfillment the baby must reach out, grasp it, put it in his mouth, suck it, savor it, taste it, manipulate it, smell it, physically be one with it. From here comes our notion of heaven itself. Every experience of happiness in later life is a stirring of that ineradicable memory of once belonging wholly to the life of the planet.

Another sentence, from "The Poetics of the Physical World," (*Iowa Review*, Summer 1971, p. 121) explicitly follows our sense of oneness with the world back to the womb itself: "Isn't the very concept of paradise also only a metaphor? Our idea of that place of bliss must be a dream extrapolated from our rapturous moments on earth, moments perhaps of our infancy, perhaps beyond that, of our foetal existence."

The first three sections of Poem I have moved in toward the foetal somersaulting of section 4, the sense of "belonging wholly to the life of the planet." The last three sections move out again into the torn world. Chronologically, Maud's residence in the womb is the earliest event in "Maud Moon"; the first four sections moved progressively back in time to that original paradise. The next three sections move forward again to her birth, to her crying in the crib, and finally to a glimpse of her later life.

Section 5 is the birth. "Being itself" gives her into the shuddering grip of departure; separation is built into the nature of things. She skids out, in section 6, still clotted with celestial cheesiness, still glowing with the astral violet of the underlife. But they cut her umbilical tie to the darkness and her limbs shake as the memories rush out of them. She screams her first song and her arms clutch at the emptiness — as Kinnell's hands, in section 1, kept holding the empty space where the woman's face had been.

Section 7 becomes more distant, more reflective. Maud is now remembered in the past tense, as she was in section 2, after the more immediate present-tense birthing in the middle sections. Here Kinnell, still by the mountain fire presumably, thinks back to Maud in her crib and his own singing to her. The song itself is the main subject of this last section. It is no angel song but a blacker rasping; nonetheless it has cosmic allegiances. He learned the song under the Maud moon, when Sagittarius sucked the biestings, the first milk, of the cosmos. And he learned it from marshes where he could hear the "long rustle of being and perishing," where earth oozed up, "touching the world with the underglimmer of the beginning." The song carries intimations of a larger life beneath and above this one.

As the tramps in section 1 unhouseled themselves on cursed bread, so here in the last section Kinnell foresees a time when Maud will be orphaned, emptied of wind-singing, with pieces of cursed bread on her tongue. The poem has moved from the brokenness and desolation of the first section into the miraculous "oneness under the hill" and back to separation and cold and curse again at the end. But in the last section there is the song, the poem, the *Book of Nightmares*, doing what it can to make connections. As Maud, crying in her crib, knew sadness "flowing from the other world," so she will remember the specter of her father, with ghostly forefathers behind him, singing to her in the nighttime. This section states, indirectly, the hope of the book: to be there, a raspy spectral voice reminding us

that wholeness is at least conceivable, as Maud and the rest of us see the oath broken between flesh and spirit, between our lives and the life of the planet.

II

I have emphasized the symmetry of the first poem. The whole *Book of Nightmares*, though extremely various in its moods and inclusive in its details, is built on a similarly symmetrical pattern — in fact, the mirror image of the structure we have seen in “Maud Moon.” That poem moves from fragmentation to wholeness and back to fragmentation; the whole book moves from Maud’s birth with its affecting glimpse of the oneness we must have experienced in the womb or in infancy, to the relentless meditation on death in Poem V and the hellish picture of human depravity in Poem VI, and then back to the birth of Kinnell’s son Sancho Fergus and the qualified celebration in the last poem. This symmetry is reinforced by details recurring in Poems I and X: the path, stream, and fire on the mountain, the bear, the two births, the constellation the Archer, references to communion, etc. More than that, some images or details that occur at the beginning or end of the book occur also in the desperate center parts but with connotations reversed. For example, as we have seen, the pregnant belly appears in an exuberant passage in the first poem. In the eighth poem, the swollen belly has similar connotations. But in Poems V and VI the belly is big with death. In VI, 5, the belly of a dead soldier “opens like a poison nightflower” reminding us, by contrast, of Maud’s flowering in I, 3. Poem V, 5, develops more fully the deadly-birth image. Here the drunk dies, his flesh turns violet, and “the whine of omphalos blood starts up again, the puffed bellybutton explodes, the carnal nightmare soars back to the beginning.”

A couple of other details similarly link the dead center of the book with the beginning or end. In II, 5, the Northern

Lights flashed and disappeared until Kinnell thought he could "read the cosmos spelling itself, the huge broken letters shuddering across the black sky and vanishing." The comparable detail in V, 4, has none of this sense of ambiguity and wonder, no sense that the cosmos might magically flicker its meaning above the horizon. Here the message is manmade, definite, and final: "I saw the ferris wheel writing its huge, desolate zeroes in neon on the evening skies." One other instance: in VI, 2, the air force gunner, Burnsie, says,

remember that pilot
who'd bailed out over the North,
how I shredded him down to catgut on his strings?
one of his slant eyes, a piece
of his smile, sail past me
every night right after the sleeping pill. . .

That catgut comes back in X, 5 as the strings out of which the violinist draws his music.

Even these two small details, the writing on the night sky and the catgut, give some sense of the structural movement of the book. It begins aware of death and torn lives, to be sure, but nonetheless buoyed up in the first two or three poems by glimmers of cosmic writing, remnants of celestial cheesiness, or intimations of the underlife. By V and VI, the book moves under "the absolute spell of departure," the neon zeroes of death. Men detest the sweat of their own bodies and shred other men to catgut because they love the sound of the guns and the feel of them in their hands. In the last poems love is again possible — under the pear tree which grows out of the boneyard, the aceldama bought with Judas's silver. Deeply acquainted with death, the wood and catgut will open again to love's singing.

III

The introduction of the mountain scene in I and the return

to it in X leads Dennis McCarthy to argue (in conversation) that this place may be taken as the literal location of the poem, with all the rest being the hiker's mental journeying. This much is evident: as the book opens, Kinnell, the speaker, is making a fire on a path by a stream in the rain, remembering a woman whose face he has held in his hands, thinking of the bear he has not yet encountered out ahead of him, and, as he sings into the fire, thinking of his daughter. By the final poem he has climbed further up the mountain. The fire is now behind him, still flaring in the rain, and the stream is now skinny waterfalls that wander out of heaven and strike the cliffside. The bear that was out ahead is now present, his fur glistening in the rain, like Sancho Fergus' hair. Standing in the old shoes flowed over by rainbows of hen oil, Kinnell calls out toward the cliff and listens for an echo, hears the clatter of elk hooves, and looks down on the river below. This scene does contain many details that develop into prominent motifs as the book grows: the path, the stream, the bear, the stones, the woman who is his torn half and whom he has just left in Waterloo, Iowa, the fire, the daughter and son, even the old shoes and the hen — or at least the grease from the hen. It seems to me plausible to think of this as the literal setting of the poem, made intense partly by his having just let necessity draw him away from the woman in Waterloo. "The Hen Flower," "The Shoes of Wandering," and the rest then become meditations triggered by elements in that literal scene. They are the imaginative or spiritual journey the speaker takes as he is climbing a few hundred yards or a mile or two up the mountain from the site of the fire to the clearing where the bear nods and turns.

One hesitates to push this reading too hard, for a couple of reasons. For one thing, even though the stream, the shoes, the hen, the children, the divided lovers, etc. recur throughout the book, there are few references between I and X to the mountain scene itself. (In fact, four: V, 4; VII, 4; VIII, 7; and IX, 1.)

Can we travel through all the rich and emotional material in between and still hold in mind the mountain location? If Kinnell had intended us to do that, would he not have brought us back to that scene more often? Second, the description of Maud's birth in the first poem and Fergus' birth in the last gives a strong sense of time elapsed. (Probably our knowing that Kinnell wrote the book over a four-year period contributes, illegitimately, to that feeling.) But those reasons do not seem to me conclusive. There the hiker is, further up the mountain in the tenth poem, and if a reader finds it helpful to see the book as an internal journey, a series of meditations bracketed by the literal fire and bear on the mountain, I believe he is justified in doing so.

IV

Now a few observations about Poems II, IV, VII, and X and their place in the progress of the book. Again, I am dealing with the general contours of these poems, their structure, saying little about the lovely modulations of tone and texture that draw the reader along, surprising him and engaging his feelings page after page.

If "Maud Moon" recalls the glimmers of the celestial, the intimations of immortality that we knew from before birth and still could touch in earliest childhood, "The Hen Flower" considers death and the mysteries, if any, that lie beyond it. It is as though Kinnell, in order to write Maud a true book for the days when she finds herself orphaned, must discover as much as can be known about death. He begins that exploration here in the second poem.

In the first and last sections of II Kinnell is sprawled face down on the mattress of hen feathers, aware of how little there is between himself and the long shaft of darkness shaped as himself, and wishing he could let go, throw himself on the mercy of darkness like the hen who woozes off when its throat is stroked, throws its head back on the chopping block, and

longs to die. The "letting go" that Kinnell wishes to instruct himself in is probably, in part, a literal willingness to die when the time calls for it. It may be, as well, the death of the self that he speaks of in "Poetry, Personality, and Death" (pp. 72-74) as when in the deepest lovemaking "the separate egos vanish; the wand of cosmic sexuality rules." A paragraph from that essay may clarify this death-longing:

The death of the self I seek, in poetry and out of poetry, is not a drying up or withering. It is a death, yes, but a death out of which one might hope to be reborn more giving, more alive, more open, more related to the natural life. I have never felt the appeal of that death of self certain kinds of Buddhism describe — that death which purges us of desire, which removes us from our loves. For myself, I would like a death that would give me more loves, not fewer. And greater desire, not less. Isn't it possible that to desire a thing, to truly desire it, is a form of having it? I suppose nothing is stronger than fate — if fate is that amount of vital energy allotted each of us — but if anything were stronger, it would not be acquiescence, the coming to want only what one already has, it would be desire, desire which rises from the roots of one's life and transfigures it.

"The Hen Flower" has its symmetries, as does "Maud Moon," but the internal organization is different. Here, in sections 2 through 6, two views of death alternate, one prevailing for a section or a paragraph and then the other having its say. The first sees death as simple extinction, the cheeks of the axed hen caving in, the gizzard convulsing, the next egg skidding forth, ridding her of the life to come. This is the tone of the passage in 5 in which the mockingbird sings the cry of the rifle, the tree holds the bones of the sniper, and the chameleon is not changed, not raised incorruptible, but remains the color of blood. It is the tone of the paragraph in 6 in which the rooster groans out for Kinnell, as for the stonily doctrinaire Peter, *it is the empty morning*. But playing off against this

view of death as literal and final are those wonderful, half-comic hen-resurrection passages — the one in which the be-headed hen waits for the blaze in the genes that according to gospel shall carry it back into pink skies, where geese cross at twilight honking in tongues. And the one in which the Northern Lights, seen through the spealbone of a ram, appear to spell mysteries against the black sky. And the one in which Kinnell flings high the carcass of the hen and watches the dead wings creak open as she soars across the arms of the Bear.

Section 4, at the center of "The Hen Flower," takes us into the opened cadaver of the hen, back to the mystery of hen-death past the diminishing eggs toward the icy pulp of what is. There zero freezes itself around the finger. If there is any ambiguity here, it lies in our knowledge that zero is not only the end of the diminishing series of positive numbers but also the beginning of the series of negative numbers. But this may be too hopeful a reading for that cold cipher. Oneness was at the center of I; the center of II is zero.

In II Kinnell has instructed himself to let go, to throw himself on the mercy of darkness, "to say all," as he says in the *Ohio Review* interview (Fall 1972, p.30). In III, the dangerous journey begins. After a kind of vigil at the Xvarna Hotel (a Zoroastrian word, Kinnell says, meaning "hidden light"), he sets out, lost to his old self and aware of his inadequacy on this strange road where even the most elementary questions are a puzzle.

The fourth poem, "Dear Stranger Extant in Memory by the Blue Juniata," is one of the most complex and difficult. The first three sections describe three different places where one might look for help or insight or guidance on the uncertain journey — and all three fail to provide it. No longer hoping for some mythic gatekeeper, or deskman, to swing open the steel doors and announce a new day, Kinnell still listens for the church's tinny sacring-bell, rung during the Eucharist at the ele-

vation of the bread and wine. He hopes for some instruction from this old ceremony. But the *chime* is just *chyme*, a mass of semi-digested food. Instead of the bread and wine of our loves being transformed into the sacred body and blood, they are chewed and swallowed. The physical remains physical, subject to maggots. In section 2, Virginia is in touch with something supernatural, some force that can lead her hand to draw circles and figure eights and mandalas — all symbols of wholeness, infinity, or perfection. But she sees this magic not as benevolent but as terrifying and demonic. In 3, the natural landscape of rural America, the primal garden, has also lost its efficacy. The root-hunters are pulling up ginseng, violating the virginal woods so that they may sell artificial aphrodisiacs. (The first chapter of Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return*, titled "Blue Juniata," evokes just this sense of irrecoverable innocence, a lost world: "Somewhere the turn of a dirt road or the unexpected crest of a hill reveals your own childhood, the fields where you once played barefoot, the kindly trees, the landscape by which all others are measured and condemned.")

Section 4 provides a recipe for the only potion that we can hope may remake us. It is an unsavory concoction of salvaged bits of magic and religion, the fragments of belief or intuition "that mortality could not grind down into the meal of blood and laughter." It is here, drawn through terrors by this imperfect magic, that we may find one more love, a face to be held in the hands, or one more poem whose title must be "Tenderness toward Existence." What stands against nothingness, the vacuum, here in section 4 is far more modest than the oneness asserted at the center of I. But it is something, a love or a poem to tie one to existence.

The world is not transformed by the potion. In the last three sections the Juniata (which flows through the Appalachians in south central Pennsylvania) is no longer blue or virginal, the sanctus bell dies against the sheetglass city, there is no second coming of resurrected hen, people do not share their dark-

ness to make one light. As the primal garden of 3 becomes the dark shore of 5, so the letter of 2 is balanced by the even more desperate letter of 6. For Virginia, the super-natural holds nothing but terror. And the final section is Kinnell's acceptance of distances and wounds.

With the fifth poem, "In the Hotel of Lost Light," the traveler becomes an intimate of death. In the sixth, "The Dead Shall be Raised Incorruptible," he goes far beyond that, touching the very bottom of human depravity, especially American depravity. The deaths are no longer individual or personal; they have become institutional. (Both poems have the quality of legal documents — V a sort of death certificate, signed and dated in V, 7, and VI a last will and testament.) The title of VI is heavily ironic. In this poem, there is no sign that flesh will be changed, raised incorruptible. Corruption reigns. Only the prayer in the last section, "do not remove this last poison cup from our lips," may be intended without irony. Perhaps we must drink horror to the bottom of the cup if we are to have any hope of recovering from it.

Poem VII, "Little Sleep's-Head Sprouting Hair in the Moonlight," opens with this sentence: "You scream, waking from a nightmare." Here the book wakes from the nightmare of VI. Maud, whom we have not seen since "Maud Moon" (except perhaps in IV, 5, if that is Maud crying in her bed by the Juniata) reappears, Kinnell's arms heal themselves holding her, and the tone changes to a relaxed, affectionate one. Death is still very much part of the poem, as it will be to the end, but now the emphasis shifts to the effect that the awareness of death has on our loves.

The center of VII seems to me to fall in section 5, rather than 4, and in general VII is less symmetrical than its predecessors. Perhaps the somewhat looser organization contributes to the change of pace and tone.

The subject of VII is permanence — or, rather, the inevitability of change. In the opening scene, Maud clings to her

father as though he would never die, and in the second section Kinnell wishes he might hold Maud forever out of the world of decay. But both of them sense the pre-trembling of a house that falls. In the restaurant, Maud shouted once, stopped all the devouring in midair — but only for a moment.

In section 4, Kinnell imagines the time, in 2009, when Maud will be the age he is now and will walk, as he is, in the rain, among the black stones that repeat one word *ci-gît* ("here lies. . ."). In another glimpse of Maud's future, in 5, Kinnell sees her with a lover in a café at one end of the Pont Mirabeau, again re-enacting Kinnell's experience, thinking that the bridge arcs from love into enduring love. For Maud, as she lives these events for herself, Kinnell has one piece of advice — that she should reach more deeply into the sorrows to come, touch the bones under the face, hear under the laughter the wind across the black stones, not to lessen the intensity of the moment but to increase it. She should know that *here is the world*: this mouth, this laughter, these temple bones. The cadence of vanishing is the only measure she can dance to.

As section 4 and 5 moved forward in time, section 6 moves back to connect, in a lovely metaphor, Maud's mortality with that of Kinnell's father:

I can see in your eyes
the hand that waved once
in my father's eyes, a tiny kite
wobbling far up in the twilight of his last look:
and the angel
of all mortal things lets go the string.

Then he puts her back into her crib and promises that when he comes back (from climbing that stony mountain?) they will walk out together with the knowledge that *the wages of dying is love*. This idea, love's dependence on death, is critical in understanding the rest of the book. The force of it comes through clearly in this paragraph from "The Poetics of the Physical World" (p. 125):

It is through something radiant in our lives that we have been able to dream of paradise, that we have been able to invent the realm of eternity. But there is another kind of glory in our lives which derives precisely from our inability to enter that paradise or to experience eternity. That we last only for a time, that everyone and everything around us lasts only for a time, that we know this, radiates a thrilling, tragic light on all our loves, all our relationships, even on those moments when the world, through its poetry, becomes almost capable of spurning time and death.

This meditation on mutability prepares us for "The Call across the Valley of Not-Knowing," the book's strongest and most eloquent statement of the coming-together that is possible in love. Poem VIII is organized much as I is, moving from incomplete or partly broken love (the split half-persons Aristophanes speaks of in Plato's *Symposium*) toward a remembered moment of wholeness in section 4, and back to separation across the valley of not-knowing. But here the wholeness is not recalled from the womb but experienced in adult life — the coming together for a moment of body and thought, of man and unviolated nature, of love and the knowledge of death, of lover and lover.

"The Path among the Stones" (IX), for me the least energetic of the poems, recapitulates the movement of the whole book down into the dismal mineshaft where a man squats by his hell-flames and then, tentatively, back up.

The magnificent tenth poem, "Lastness," has a structure of its own, but more important than this internal shape, perhaps, is its function in drawing together, into an ambiguous resolution, the themes and images that have twisted and grown through the whole book. The organization of X may be summarized very briefly: the first section re-establishes the mountain scene. The second and third sections present the positive and negative halves of the dichotomy that has played all through the book: wholeness is possible, yet everything breaks,

falls apart, dies. The fourth section brings together those two opposites in the figure 10. The rest of the poem shows what follows from that conjunction of one and nothing, what kind of music, or poetry, may be sung out of it and what kind of life it implies.

Consider the cluster of images in each section. Even the first section, made of three direct sentences, holds the double vision that pervades the book. At this height, the stream is a series of skinny waterfalls, footpaths wandering out of heaven and shattering on the cliffside — reminiscent of the oath (I,1) sworn in the clouds and broken on earth, sworn and broken over and over. There is — and is not — a communion between the cosmos and our torn selves. Similarly, this section brings back all the water and fire that have gone before. The desolation of wet ashes, cursed bread in the rain, is eased by a twig fire, kindled out of a particular human love but, now that the self does not clutch for its own so greedily, part of a less personal vitality that keeps flaring up in a dying world.

Section 2, a touchstone if there ever was one, catches up in the bear and Sancho Fergus all the poem's images of what it is to belong wholly to the life of the planet. Here is the primal garden (IV), the blossoming of brain and body under the knowledge of tree (VIII) encompassed in the glistening of this new birth. The man watching the bear from the fringe of the trees is still a death-creature, still capable of the perversions and violations catalogued in poem VI, but at this moment he can become bear watching bear. That innocence echoes in the pride and freshness of Sancho Fergus' birth. Though Fergus' smile acknowledges disasters to follow, the force of this section is wonder at the glistening oneness of bear fur, boy fur, and the grasslands and fern of the newborn planet.

As Kinnell walks toward the cliff, in section 3, calling out to the stone, the stone calls back — and then does not, turns to stone, sending nothing back. He stands between the answer and nothing, as he stood in "The Hen Flower" between the

resurrected hen soaring across the arms of the Bear and the cold cadaver of hen, the icy pulp of what is. This is where the shoes have stood all along; this is where the journey into the future must be made — between the answer and nothing. At the end of the section, the negative half of the truth bears in more heavily. He learns again what he has been learning throughout the book, that *To Live* has a poor cousin, who pronounces the family name *To Leave*. In a clatter of elk hooves, the empyrean has emptied itself of whatever eternal truths it may have held. The truth now is that the earth is all there is and the earth does not last. The journey stops here. Living brings you to death, there is no other road.

The central section of the tenth poem pulls together all the ones and zeroes that have gone before: the oneness under the hill, the oneness of two loving halves put together, the oneness, perhaps, of man and bear and boy and planet in X, 2; and the freezing zero of hen corpse, the desolate neon zeroes of the ferris wheel, the zeroes the skipped wafer-stone leaves on the water. There can be no resolution. One and zero walk off the pages together, one creature side by side with the emptiness. The two need each other. Our brightness, gathered up out of time, takes some of its radiance from the fact that it will end, leaving nothing behind. And the death that resides in old cars, river-mist, and constellations is a beginning, too, as in the woodcut on the cover of *Book of Nightmares* new words are drawn out of the mouth of the man about to be devoured by the raven.

Out of love and the awareness of death, one and zero, comes the only music worthy of us. The ladies and gentlemen in the chandeliered room may look as though they would never die, but the violinist who puts the irreversible sorrow of his face into the palm of the wood knows better. As the rasping song of "Maud Moon" is at once a love-note and a howl, so the violinist's music knows the waves of holy desire of VIII and the flesh of the pilot, in VI, shredded to catgut. It is made out of the sexual wail of back-alleys and the sliced intestine of cat.

The book is not just song, or poem, but a life as well (as Kinnell says in response to a question about X, 6 in the *Ohio Review* interview). We are left with an image of how one may live: the sky-diver, floating free, opening his arms into the attitude of flight, as he obeys the necessity and falls. He has come back to the instructions of "The Hen Flower," to let go, to throw himself on the mercy of darkness. The ambiguity persists to the end. The worms on his back are still spinning forth the silk of his loves and already gnawing away at them. And for a son whose father's body will be laid out, both reactions are fitting: Don't cry! Or else, cry.

V

In reply to Robert Frost's dictum that writing free verse is like playing tennis with the net down, Kinnell writes, "It is an apt analogy, except that the poem is less like a game than like a journey. . . ." ("Poetics of the Physical World," p. 114) Kinnell's poems have frequently been journeys literally, as well as figuratively. Even in his first book, *What a Kingdom It Was*, "Westport," "Where the Track Vanishes," and "The Descent" are all traveling poems. So is "The Bear." So are many others. But *The Book of Nightmares* is the big journey, the one that encompasses the whole passage of our lives. The scope of its motion makes one think of *Paradise Lost* or the *Odyssey*. It is the hiker's journey up the mountain (on the Olympic Peninsula, Kinnell says), but inside that journey the poem travels back to the beginning, to the unborn child complete in its dark world or even further back to man before he had evolved away from the bear, when he was wholly at one with the planet. It moves through separation and knowledge of death into the collective depravity and wanton destruction of the Vietnam war. But it leads out of that slough, too, by way of Maud and Fergus, and love for a woman, and a hoarse song.

The traveler reaches no destination. In an interview in the *Iowa Review* (Spring 1970, p. 129) Kinnell says,

One of the blessings of being my age is that you need not talk about the *purpose* of your life. When one is young, one perhaps longs for a goal or purpose. But life itself is insulted by having to be justified by a goal; life *is*, and that is all there is to it. And to open oneself to the rhythm of being born and dying, while it is awful, since it means facing your terror of death, it is also glorious, for then you are one with the creation, the cosmos.

When one and zero walk off the end of the poem's pages together, they are not headed toward a conclusion. The lone creature can only keep on journeying, side by side with the emptiness. But now, at the poem's end, the journey reverberates with cosmic terror and grandeur.

THE BULLET, THE SPONGE, THE FACE

1

The bullet doesn't pass through you,
as you hoped it would:
it germinates, a seed
inside a clear plastic statue.
Soon, pale roots and vines
pack the body
and press against transparent walls.

2

The sponge soaked up
spilled blood. Right then
you should have squeezed it out,
because when it dried
it became a rock.

3

This whole face made of tears.
And now this wadded kleenex,
white snail, has eaten
holes in it, as if it were a leaf.

THE SPIDER

Each night since my mother died
I sit at the table
while the spider spins her web.
She goes over it again and again,
until each strand is thick and soft.
When the web is finished, the spider
shrinks. She is exhausted.
I slip my hands carefully
into the web's empty spaces,
lift it like gray yarn
and carry it into the kitchen.

THE SNAIL

The snail sat in the blind man's palm.
The man remembered Helen Keller's dream:
that she held a pearl in her hand,
and she 'saw' it,
the most beautiful thing in her life.
"What is a snail?" the blind man asked.
It is a pearl that dies.
You can find its empty shell
at the foot of a tree in the woods
like a white ear that is listening.

INSTRUCTIONS ON THE WAY TO THE ORIFICES

1

put a finger in the ear
 and pull out a plug of honey.
put a finger in the vagina
 and pull out a piece of wet moon.
put a finger in the anus
 and pull out an old shoe with a heavy tongue.
put a finger in the nose
 and pull out a sheet of hand-blown glass.
put a finger in the penis
 and pull out a string of pearls.
put a finger in the mouth
 and pull out the winter ocean.

2

Now that they are empty
and before you go in
take a finger
and press it against a hard surface.
Inside lies another finger,
stronger than the rest.
It is black, it cannot wiggle,
it is too wet to burn.
It is a crow with a taped mouth
that nests in your hand
and will not eat.
Even when it's asleep
it won't talk.

When you get there
your finger will feel like the runt of the litter,
a blind stump,
the body that could not be born.

WATER

It has to do with my body being less than human, a heavy load of sponge surrounding my bones, it has to do with my vagina being bigger than my mouth, darker than a blindfolded child, it has to do with my brain being crossed with deep tearducts, all that heavy mental transportation, that night creek, men pushing their penises into the bushes to piss gracefully in the river, it is related to the crack in the window of my spectacles, with the dead skin cells I find inside my pants at night, with a discharge that I must eat, with my mother's thin yellow neck, with blue mountains that breathe sweetly and absorb mist, it has to do with the thousands of times I walked up different front steps and found the same white beveled door and set of soft furniture within, with the scraping noises I have heard dirt make to itself, the milk bottles shivering in the refrigerator, my uncle too bald and winding spaghetti around his neck, the bocce ball games on Sunday at my grandmother's, the plastic sofa cases, the Virgin over each bed, Uncle Pip with diabetes, a belly the size of New Jersey, my mother pulling the phone out of the wall as I talked, the poem I then wrote and she found, her reply, it has to do with my photographing the moon each month, studying the barn past the window, holding a mirror to my genitals, the nightmare on the red plain where the old man and child sat in the white corner of a room, the other dream of the Chinese man I offered the cup of green tea on the river train in the black forest, it has to do with a child's feet on marble below a black Buddha, stone, cold, eyelids, with trains that lumber past thin deciduous forests, highways with buck teeth, night birds that bruise buildings, finally, it has to do with Tu Fu, how his stomach exploded in sorrow on top of the mountain, too much meat after starving for so many days during the flood, with the poems that need a glass of water if they are to speak.

OVER TIME

1

The slow, the soft
attentions. Over generations
of wiping the penis dry
against a special village wall,
Muslim devotion
has etched brick. / Truly,
her husband
night by night worked more
accumulative weight up her life than her gravestone
could counterbalance.

2

Up at State, the latrine's
called The Stinkhole, and piss eats
stone, there are stories of urine calendars,
legends of urine jailbreaks. Here:
a convict
battered this cup against his bars
for an hour, and nothing changed.
But he was in
for twelve years, and his lips
on the cup wore its tin lip down.

THE ORIGIN OF PORNO

Studying the horse, we understand
how hard-core followed the invention
of photography. There's a dark compelling
muscle framed by the flanks. There's

a question, an academic question, of at
which point in a leap the female breast
is highest? In the early, stopwatched studies,
light slopes down the breasts like a scree. There's

a question of time, there's a sepia
exactitude. The powder erupts:
in the foreground —two lovers / a basket / red wine.
In the back, a clocked thoroughbred sudses.

*Is there ever a moment when all four feet
leave the ground? And so we invent pornography.*

FROM THE PHYSICAL TO

And when he rose from four legs to two, above the bestial sniff-at-the-asshole, what did Man lose? Ernst Haeckel postulates that olfactory sensation was the original sex attractant, in the primeval water, and linked the first two cells. In the black, in the back caviar of the body, the farflung progeny of one of those cells still lathers in each of us. What we gained, of course, was a richer brain: the ability to conceptualize, to remove the rose from the nostril and say "the rose is *like* . . ." "the rose is *named* . . ." "the rose can be made better" A step, in that leap to two feet: from the physical to the functioning-beyond-physical; or —a little closer to being a ghost.

*

As if I mattered to anyone today. I gave directions, pointing confusedly with my ink-whorled fingers to someone in a tweed cap; I made the Office Chatter, and they made the Office Chatter with me, and we were witty, and walked out separate doors to the char-gray rain, and what the day had to offer has washed off a yellow raincoat, and only a pale remembrance of ink still clings in my thumb's congenital relief map, and even that's going fast. . . We *are* ghosts. For the difference I made, or they made, we passed *through* each other, not even giving the little that remains to inform an x-ray. It might only be weeks—or days—till I fumble my nicked keys at the office door, stumble in and plop in the chair's three creaks, and hear them wonder what eerie wind has entered the building and rustled the shuffle of papers on Goldbarth's desk. . .

*

There are ghosts, and there will be more ghosts, they exist in the past or in extrapolation, there is the ghost of my arm, in my arm, as I write this, it wants to rise like chalk-dust from the trough, there are ghosts, they long to settle. A handsome Italian lover is hovering over the lotioned dildo, he is mist, he is hardening muscle, he is fog, the ghost of sexual loneliness clasped in its plastic case. A plowman, a ruddy-faced lout in his 40's, is plying the left breast of the wet-nurse, he has fathered every child she's given suck to for fifteen years, she wears him between her two great rubbery tits like a pendant, he's real, he's fading, he's a sepia neuron, he strokes her to sleep, there are ghosts. *You dinna hear o animals wi' ghosts.* Or of animals with anguish.

*

I'm talking, I guess, about politics —that is, national priorities. And what's most important, here in this one squat Greyhound Bus Station serving as a link in the country's nervous system, is movement. The bus has democratized twentieth century rapidity, call it *mobility* it's a good thing, call it *goodbye* and the straw-hatted geezer with liver-spots weighing down his hands is in the corner near the yellowed tub of drinking water, trying hard not to cry. There are hands here, and hands at airports, and hands at the docks, and at taxi stands, waving *farewell* so fast, they disappear. You can prove it, cut and shuffle a deck of birth certificates . . . see? Or: there's an alley cur with its leg lifted, pissing declamatory stink against the Greyhound Station wall. And there's a line of a hundred thumbs on the highway, hitching; the sun goes clear through them some days.

*

Hey: it's a dream we all have —the most sober of us wakes with it shaking him once a year: that we fling the door open —it's storming outside, huge thunderheads like worried brains in the sky— and enter the office on all fours, howling, upsetting the grapefruit rinds from the wastepaper baskets. . . There is something in that ring of dogs this morning, circling snout-to-ass like a backyard Uroborous, endless and whole. There's a tiny pink rose beneath the she-dog's tail. The petals open. Close.

THE IRREPARABLE DAMAGES

no talk.
scarred silence.

my day seamed by the clock,
not your pattern.
you caress the machine;
I clutch.

a box of donuts
that seemed to make me happy.

expectation without reason.

sleeping in the living room
night after night, believing
I covered you tenderly.

sleeping with others.
tit for tat arrangements
that made it square.

holding the pathetic
up to the streetlight.
trying to sleep on it.

an excuse.

paths neither one resisted,
neither wanted. compromise.
who was father? who was mother?
Child?

the words, of course.
too late, too early, much
too loud, lacking
the emotion, grabbing for it,
leaving unreachable
irritations we could not erase
with our fingernails.

mornings you would not get up.

THE FIVE DREAMS

What are the five dreams of the elders?

Richard, for all his beard, has seen
mist on an autumn pond and hears
water, the color of cognac, rising
and falling in the reeds of the shallows.
He thrusts his fingers through his hair
and each nail glistens with oil.
He knows that water is giving and taking,
and that it will give and take though fists
slam shut, though the high curse
of his name burns on the door plate.

Wayne is backed against a wall of books,
and the fireplace, the *place* of fire,
reddens his forehead. In his nostrils,
two cables of air freeze, and on them
he hangs in the world. He spreads his arms,
one hand the wing of a leather testament;
the other, the one with a dead ring,
seizes a last book of poetry.
The fire eats all shadows but one.

These were two dreams of the elders.

Emily has brushed her hair forever.
Now it is earth, and pours to her feet.
Half moons glint at her fingertips,
and sand drifts from her mouth, her ears,
the corners of her eyes. She is content.
It was prophesied. Her children look in
at the windows, pale as moonlight.

Remember when they gnawed her breasts?
When she is empty, they will press her
in a book, the book of earth.

Mary knows there are dead places in her.
The doctors, well, the doctors are guessing.
Richard's kiss is dead, but we all
shed layers, and when we have been struck
too often, part of us turns to the wall.
She knows, too, that when the last cobs
of snow melt, green incoherence leaps
from eye to eye. And Wayne's ring?
Well, it turned green before it died.
She takes it off. It pings on the parquet.
The ring scar reddens. She feels better.

This is the last dream of the elders.

Each house has a room that's always locked.
This is the room of dreaming. Sometimes
it is a room of slow water where a huge eye
glares. Sometimes there is a bed
of glacial sheets, slow, slow, and in them
we can see our gill parents. And, praise God,
one night the young of us will lie down together
in a shadow of black hair. And one day
we will return, put down our cases,
pass through the room where the fist
opens, where the earth sifts, where the ring
spins to quiet. Then, we lie down in the milky,
slow sheets, when the door closes
and is a door no longer.

JAMES, FLYING

You have found two feathers,
one haygold sliver which
held to the light shows
the shadow of a tree,

and one blue as Capri, white-capped
and ringed like a coon's tail,
which reverses
to cataract grey.

Two papery jewels
holding you up, you say,
as you leap from branch
to branch, hissing

like the embers of a phoenix,

one wing for the night,
one wing for the morning.

ORIGINAL STRAWBERRY

The first strawberry:
plain as a teething ring.
And God blessed the strawberry
and eying the future made it
three leaved for the Trinity
and red for His son's blood.

The strawberry was tasty but sad.
Lord, why make me so low?
And God decreed that the meek
should inherit the earth.

But has a strawberry ears?

On the seventh day it seceded
from creation like a grieving nun.
On the eighth, stars pocked its body
(my sky at sunset, said the strawberry)
and a green sun grew on its north pole.
(My vernal equinox, said the strawberry.)

Pick a strawberry as if you were paying court.
From which constellation shall you sail
to the mandala
that only a knife can find?

ANIMALS RUNNING ON A WINDY CROWN

The music stopped. Everyone clambered aboard.
I was four and fought for the reindeer.
Grandma was seventy-four and chose a goat
without stirrups or saddle.
She lifted me up. Nobody lifted her.
The man in the middle pressed a mirror

and out gushed the beer barrel polka.
"I always loved that tune," said Grandma,
rising and falling the way she rode
triumphant under the elms downtown
in her old LaSalle after the springs died out.
My steed was swift and unexceptional,

hers wore a ruby in its breast
like St. Hubert's vision of the stag
when he gave up venison for Jesus.
Beyond her hair haloing in the wind
a ferris wheel wound up the sun,
its tiny cars ringing the trees to rest.

THE WHEELING GOSPEL TABERNACLE

Homer Rhodeheaver, who was the evangelist Billy Sunday's psalmodist and shill at the offertory, did something in the year of Our Lord 1925 that made both of my parents almost ecstatic with happiness all the rest of their lives until they died within a few months of each other in 1973.

Just as the Reverend Doctor Sunday was admonishing the congregation in congress assembled with his customary warning that they warn't no virtue in the clinking of shekels, a wicked sound; just as the Reverend Doctor was in full oratorical blossoming cry in praise of each silken soft certain rustle of one twenty-dollar bill against another in the wicker collection-plate; just as the former semi-professional baseball player of the Lord God Almighty Lord of Hosts was advising how as "Bruthern, a twenty don't take up no more room in that there plate than a wun" — it happened.

One of Dr. Sunday's locally hired ushers glided to the minister's side and with ghostly discretion reported to the evangelical ear that the cops from Pittsburgh had just left Weirton, West Virginia, and were hurtling down the West Virginia Route Forty in their prohibition-style armored Cord cars, bound to catch Homer Rhodeheaver in full song. He was wanted in Pittsburgh on a paternity charge.

By the time the Pittsburgh cops burst into the Wheeling Gospel Tabernacle, it was as empty and dark as the waiting-room of a speakeasy. Where had the brethren gone? Some thought that Dr. Sunday ascended. I lean toward the opinion that the two laborers in the vineyards of the Lord skinned the populace of Benwood down the river the next day, and that possibly Homer had time between hymns to make some lonely widow happy.

The year was 1925. My mother and father got one of their chances to laugh like hell for the sheer joy of laughter before the Great Depression began.

They were younger than I am this year. I was born two years after Homer Rhodeheaver and Billy Sunday appeared to run up their crusading flag near the blast-furnace down the Ohio River for what was surely a one-night stand.

For all I know, my mother and father loved each other in 1925. For all I know, Homer Rhodeheaver is still in full flight from the Paternity Squad of the Pittsburgh Police Department. For all I know, Homer Rhodeheaver really was a glorious singer of the great hymns down home. For all I know, he carried a better tune than he knew. Women heard him in Pittsburgh. Maybe women heard him in the Wheeling Gospel Tabernacle. Maybe Jehovah was drowsing, and Eros heard the prayer and figured that love after all was love, no matter what language a man sang it in, so what the hell.

Little I know. I can pitch a pretty fair tune myself, for all I know.

BLUE YODEL Of Her Feet

Times I can't look you
In the face you're a wolf
That's killed things I once loved
So I look at your feet
Dark from summer like paws
Soft as buds
Hard as branches they hold
The weight of your body
Cold naked statue I like to frighten
Your waist is a place of solitude
Briars in the forest
Your chest gives ground
Like an island on a river
And as they yodel in the song of songs
Your nipples taut as raisins
Killdeers try to fly from your eyes
I wish I could nail your shoes to the floor
And lose your socks
Good plants bearing in bad soil
So hard to raise my eyes
Over the rest of you
So I look at your feet
They walked over the ground when you found me
They'll cover the same terrain
When I lose you

ALLEGORY OF DEATH AND NIGHT

When he comes home from work
He washes his hands
And sits down at the dinner table
And eats. He doesn't say much,
He drinks from an old bottle.
What he doesn't eat, the dog does.
And while the hound is licking
The man is snoring at the table.
The woman slaps the oil cloth
With a fly swatter, and he comes to.
A milksnake is crawling
Along a rafter in the barn
And a storm is making in the east.
There is a bird flying high
And the shadow of smoke
From the last fires in the moonlight.
He's laying crossways over the bed
On his belly. She's taken off
His pants and unlaced his boots.
Whatever he dreams he keeps to himself,
Like a prayer sent up for rain.
When he's dead to the world
She reaches into the pocket
Of his trousers for a white pouch.
She rolls a cigarette with one hand.
She smokes in the dark. Clouds
Go by, turning under the soil.
She turns a flashlight on
The man's body, looking for seed
Ticks that have been there since dawn.

CHILDREN AT THE POINT OF DEATH

All during his life
he thought about them
when they died
they died
strange
they touch birds
say what they see
walk fence lines
with a fake limp
like they were
in pain
so
some of them are dead
some of them are handsome
and some mysterious
silent
but not for long
they tell you
men scarcely know
how beautiful fire is
they tell you stories
they can't remember
if you can
still look them in the eye

KNEW IT WAS LOVE, FELT IT WAS GLORY

after Pier Paolo Pasolini

Here is where we went out in the boats, listening
For the dogs and children, for the girl laughing
When she lifts her dress, for the open casket,
Strolling through the wet libraries of moonlight.

You could smell horses, some kind of flowers.

This is the way it was before they started pissing
In the guitar player's cup:

We tried to catch wind
Of the wars
Like a fly in a book
And those who believed
They were still dreaming

In the old days a man chewed a match
And thought
About his death like a woman

He told his son to quit drinking
He told him to see the priest

He marked his bottle like a beetree
And he wanted his wife
To stay quiet in bed

He dreamed of the rains a good bull
And his daughter
Coming in late at night
Holding her shoes
In her fingers

He stared at the fire
Waiting for the voice of his best friend

He cracked open the window
And put sugar on the sill
Like the moon was an animal

The man counts to eleven and the pain comes
Again, no wonder all of them went crazy.
After all the beautiful and clever dreams
A man ought to be able to say nothing.

You can smell the dead bird, but not its song.

THE GOOD TEACHER

He was washing the day's ink off his hands when he noticed a tiny mouth in the valley of his left palm. His fingers began curling like hair over the eyes just popping from the delicate bones beneath his second and third fate lines.

His other hand and feet were singing. His arms were two rows of twenty students reciting a Spanish lesson. His legs were the two thick bullies he had flunked, poised for revenge.

What could he do? His penis rose and it was Violet Ferguson, a seventeen year old dark and quiet beauty he had secretly fallen in love with. He gently unscrewed her and ran out of the classroom which was now his body. A nun, who was barely finished decomposing, ran in from the corridor and screamed. The Miracle of The Good Teacher.

JAN AND GWEN

Jan and Gwen went down to the pier
to see the ship leave
the last idea they
would ever have
was on it

they were late
oh we missed it Jan
oh we missed it Gren
Gren?
oh Gwen I'm sorry Gren Gwen

I'm sorry you said that kitten
O *Gwen* I am really sorry
I know you are
I can feel it

I wonder what it was our last idea
said Jan as it slowly steamed away
who knows kitten but there it goes
anyway come home with me honey okay come home with me?

JOYCE CAROL OATES

I always wanted to write all the stories because the more you write the more you have written and everyone who sees all you've done will recognize that. So I started to tell everything I could think of about pronouns he she we you

but writers' block knows no favorites. Suddenly I could only do thirty or forty thousand mother mother mother oh my dear sweet mother mother mother mother sweetheart mother all I could think was

ripped her beige telephone from its miserable socket and threw it at her fat vapid lover. "I am sick of you and sick of your greedy bulge-cock moronism," said Brenda. "Well, Indianism has always defeated me . . ." Doubleknit smiled . . . "and I guess you are just more Indianism."

At first these people lived in Detroit and were sixteen and seventeen and then they moved to England and France and lost thousands of dollars in a 'funny deal.' One of them seemed to become part of a mystic cabal and then crashed into a tree.

The car handled beautifully. The road was elegantly banked. Laura threw her head into the backseat and sent her eyeballs into the midnight blue sky. They noticed how it matched his tuxedo. White line on highway whizzed and zoomed.

Cat Stevens record Stevie Wonder record Al Green record wicked stoned-out riding piggyback canopener important 'people' are the president of my house and the president of the department and the president of sub-Janis Joplin. Riproaring.

Their hose limped. The solar eclipse had come and gone in a cloud. Who are these people? she wondered. What good are them lifes doing they? It would be fun to kill strangers. If only one enemy died from work.

But there was more to tell. There are always mores to say. Brenda chivied her smoke-a-ret petulant monkey. Chapter Z.

APRIL FOOLS

The day we have been waiting for
the day on which no one ever lies
the day on which telling a lie

is religious during breakfast
April foods day during lunch
April foot day

we seem to be making enormous transitions
you love you so much
you make you happy and tired

April 2 warmer and rain
longing for wisdom
everyone can imagine that

April 3 the idea of a joke
is new again the new joke
the day we have been waiting for

April 4 common associations
the crocus forsythia underpants
frozen in dirty snow

by the road
on the way to and
from the liquor store

April 5

April 6

blue fleur-de-lis

on the white cotton

April 7 now just a rag

caught in a branch

THE MEAT EPITAPH

This is what it was: Sometime in the recent but until now unrecorded past, it was decided by cattle-ranchers that since people were increasingly insistent that "you are what you eat," all cattle on the way to market were to be marked with brief descriptive tags noting the favorite food of each beast, and how much they ate of it. This, it was felt, would both delight the diner and comfort the consumer: people would be able to tell exactly what kind of flavor and texture beef they were purchasing beforehand, and always secure exactly the kind of product most likely to delight their taste (it was something a little like our present-day system of catering to preferences for light and dark meat in chicken). The system set up seemed ideally efficient: first, they attached the tag to each beast on its last day on the ranch, just before the two or three days required for shipment to the slaughterhouse — during which travel time the animal customarily doesn't eat anything, anyway. Once at the slaughterhouse, they carefully removed the tags; and during the slaughtering, duplicated the so-called "parent tag" numerous times, preparing perhaps hundreds of tiny tags for each animal. Directly after, at the packing plant, these were affixed to the proper parts, each section of each animal being separately and appropriately tagged, as if with an epitaph. But something went wrong with this means of augmenting the diner's delight, and of comforting the consumer. At first, quite predictably, the tags came out reading things like "Much grass, a little moss, medium grain" and "Much grass, much grain, generally ate a lot." And this, as one might expect, proved a great pleasure to the consumer. But then tags began coming through reading things like "A little grass, small grain, many diverse scraps from the table"; and "She was our favorite, gave her all we had to give"; and one (featured at dinnertime one evening on national television) saying: "Goodbye, Blackie Lamb, sorry

you had to grow up — we'll miss you." Gradually, despite its efficiency, this system somehow ceased to delight the diner, and comfort the consumer. And this is how the practise of the meat epitaph began to become generally neglected during the course of time; and how people came to eat their meat, as they generally do today, partially or wholly blindfolded.

READINGS IN FRENCH

1

Looking into the eyes of Gerard de Nerval
You notice the giant sea crabs rising.
Which is what happens
When you look into the eyes of Gerard de Nerval,
Always the same thing: the giant sea crabs,
The claws in their vague red holsters
Moving around, a little doubtfully.

2

But looking into the eyes of Pierre Reverdy
Is like throwing the editorial page
Out into the rain
And then riding alone on the subway.

Also, it is like avoiding your father.
You are hiding and he looks for you
Under each vine; he is coming nearer
And nearer. What can you do
But ignore him?

3

In either case, soon you are riding alone on a subway.
Which is not important.
What is important is to avoid
Looking too closely into the eyes of your father,
That formal eclipse.

A POEM OF HORSES

Your students nod. Their glances are like huts
In which tools have been abandoned.
Maybe you have already begun dying.
Someone bumps into you and it takes root,
A low shrub, disinterested.

So you work late in an office building
While a man vacuums the floors.
Overhead, the light is eating itself.

You go further into the blank paper.
You go past the white smirk of the benign.
You find the dark trousers of your father,
The hairpins of your mother.
You hold them in your hands,

While the jails are closing in Santiago
And the sores on the gelding's withers
Are ordinary. They glisten in the rain
Outside the jail, and say nothing.

*

It was 1946 and the war was over.
Your father hung his trousers on the bed.
Your mother undressed and shook out her hair.
They moved closer. As you began,
They blindfolded the horse and led him further
Up the cliff while the shadows
Pulled on their gloves one by one and went out,
And left them alone.

PROSE POTSHOTS

Landor

"I strove with none," said Walter Savage Landor in his immortal quatrain, "for none was worth my strife."

Actually he seems to have striven with just about everybody. There is the story of his picking up a manservant and throwing him out the window in Florence. And exclaiming a moment later: "My God, the violets!"

Magic

Poets used to be thought of as magicians, pulling out of their hat of words something surprising and delightful.

Today many poets eschew magic. Instead of a mysterious rabbit, they give us the hat itself, the empty hat, the old hat with the sweaty hatband. After all (they seem to be reminding us) no hat we really wear has a rabbit in it.

A League

There used to be a league and it may still be in existence, though I haven't heard it mentioned for many a year. All I remember is that it was a league and that it was devoted to poetry.

Was it "The League to Support Poetry?" Or "The League to Promote Poetry?" Or was it "The League to Defend Poetry?" Or possibly "The League to Protect Poetry?"

Again the Rose

"The rose by any other name would smell as sweet," said Juliet.

"True," affirms the semanticist. "Very true."

"Untrue," says the poet, Juliet and Shakespeare notwithstanding. "A rose by any other name would indeed smell sweet, but not quite so sweet. It would not have that specifically rosy sweetness that it has been acquiring over the centuries."

So the semanticist does everything he can to separate words from what words stand for, while the poet does everything he can to make words and meanings identical.

Essentially a difference between science and magic.

Emily

In Amherst when someone leans out of a car window and asks the way to Emily's grave, one does not ask, "Emily who?"

The Discoverer

I once heard a man tell Robert Frost to his face that he had a sense of humor.

It was at Breadloaf years ago. Someone in the audience who was hearing Frost for the first time came up to congratulate him after the reading. With the air of a discoverer he exclaimed:

"Mr. Frost, you have a wonderful sense of humor."

Frost recoiled, blinked, and gave his head a little shake as if unprepared for the shock.

So the man repeated his discovery. "Man, I'm telling you. A wonderful sense of humor."

John Peale Bishop, John Crowe Ransom,
and Robert Penn Warren

Of these three only Robert Penn Warren has an accurately functional middle name. I imagine that John Peale Bishop never once in his life did any pealing. And as for John Crowe Ransom, you never never would have caught that fine gentleman crowing.

Byron, Kelly & Sheets

She had uttered the three names together so many times over the years that they had become fixed, inseparable, a trade name like a firm of lawyers or clothiers.

So when she stood before the Literary Section of the women's club one afternoon and announced the subject of her talk, the three names came so naturally to her tongue that she did not need to think of what she was saying.

She was a meek little body of a high school English teacher, and when the ladies tittered (as some of them must have) she must have blushed deeply.

Elegy

It was only the other day
We had Stephen Vincent Benet
And Edna St. Vincent Millay.

Festivals

When I think of the poetry festivals I have attended and taken part in, my mind goes back to the Book of Hosea, the 12th chapter, the first verse:

“Ephraim feedeth on wind.”

Local Poet

The phrase is ambiguous. It may mean merely that the poet happens to live in the same locality that you do. Or it may mean that the poet is confined to that locality, unknown beyond it.

In the current issue of my local newspaper mention is made of “two local poets.” Here the implication seems to be that the two are only a sample and that a dozen more might easily be named if one wanted to go to the bother. The locality is Amherst, Massachusetts.

But the phrase *could* mean something quite different. It could mean that the local poet not only lives here but that his poetry lives here too. It could mean that his poems have roots as well as blossoms. In this sense Dante is very much a local poet. So is Wordsworth and Emily Dickinson and perhaps even T. S. Eliot.

Friends of the Francis

If a poet is really a cultural institution as is often intimated, should he not have a supporting organization, some sort of auxiliary that would raise money in small amounts from school children and others so that the poet might enjoy now a new tape recorder, and now a fresh coat of paint on his house?

Yes, Why?

"Why don't you write confessional poetry yourself?" he was saying. "You've been bottled up goodness knows how many years. Why don't you take off the lid and let yourself go?"

"Yes," I murmured. "Why don't I?"

"You are a deep well of pure cold water. You are both the well and the drawer of water, bringing up bucketful after bucketful."

'Or cupful by cupful," I interposed.

"Why don't you now become a fountain and just flow? Flow and overflow?"

"Yes," I went on. "Why don't I splash in the sunlight and spill over the stone pavement, so that pigeons may come and drink and coo and cool their feathers, and little kids with toy boats, and old men and women, and lovers - - -?"

For Queens

Reading Richard Wilbur's celebrated poem, "Walking to Sleep," I find myself pausing over the first line.

"As queens sit down, knowing that a chair will be there."

Surely to sit down without looking to see what is there to sit on is a queenly prerogative. And over the ages countless queens may have done just that, with seldom if ever a mishap. Just the same, the world being what it now is, I should like to say to all existing queens that it would be wiser to look first.

The Multipurpose Room

When I learned that my reading at the University of Michigan was to be held in the Multipurpose Room, I was a little apprehensive. I pictured the place as a combination of snack bar, lounge, locker room, and laundromat. I wondered how my poetry, how anybody's poetry, could compete with all the other things going on. But at least it would be a striking test of the power of poetry to hold its own in the hustle and bustle of American life. And being a test, it was for me a challenge.

I was, therefore, a little disappointed as well as vastly relieved to find the Multipurpose Room filled with orderly rows of chairs and the chairs filled with a seemingly single-purpose audience.

CONTRIBUTORS

RAY AMOROSI has published in *FIELD* before, and has also had poems in recent issues of *The Iowa Review* and *Granite*. A collection of poems, *A Generous Wall*, is scheduled for publication by the Barn Dream Press.

The piece by MICHAEL BENEDIKT in this issue is from a new manuscript, *Night Cries*. His new anthology, *The Poetry of Surrealism*, seven years in the making, has just appeared from Little, Brown. Another anthology, *The Prose Poem*, is scheduled for publication by Delta Books late this year.

MARY ANNE CARTELLI is a recent graduate of Oberlin.

A collection of plays by RUSSELL EDSON, *The Falling Sickness*, is just out, published by New Directions.

Like Ghosts of Eagles (U. Mass Press) is ROBERT FRANCIS' latest collection of poems. His first collection of "potshots," *The Satirical Rogue on Poetry*, appeared from that same press in 1968, and he is well on his way toward a second one.

ALBERT GOLDBARTH is currently on the faculty at Cornell University. His books include *Jan. 31* (Doubleday), *Coprolites* (New Rivers Press), *Opticks* (Seven Woods Press), and *Keeping*, due soon from Ithaca House. He writes: "I currently have an NEA fellowship, which is good because I also have a '69 Chevy Impala and the two, unfortunately, complement each other: the grant bringeth in and the Chevy taketh away."

"As for *Notes on Contributors*," writes PAUL HANNIGAN, "I am author of *Laughing* and *The Carnation* and I would like to get it on record somewhere that a tax rebate of up to \$200.00 is a cruel and stupid joke. It's like giving people who are hungry a broken television receiver. Assholes."

CONRAD HILBERRY's second collection of poems, *Rust*, is recently out from Ohio University Press. He too is currently enjoying an NEA fellowship.

We were delighted, when we wrote MIROSLAV HOLUB, the distinguished Czech poet, for permission to publish translations of the two "meditation" poems, to receive from him three new poems as well. We wish to acknowledge the help of Ivan Bezugloff, Jr., editor of *Dressage Magazine* (Cleveland) and his assistant, Susan Tartaglino, in the translation of these poems, as well as that of Friederike Snyder, of Oberlin's German and Russian Department.

LAURA JENSEN is the author of a pamphlet, *After I Have Voted*, and has another, larger collection due soon from Penumbra Press.

LARRY LEVIS is teaching in the Writing Program at the University of Missouri-Columbia. A pamphlet, *The Rain's Witness*, will soon be published by The Southwick Press.

JOHN LOGAN is well known as a poet, teacher, and editor. This is his first appearance in *FIELD*.

W. S. MERWIN is the author of many volumes of poetry, most recently *Writings to an Unfinished Accompaniment*, and of many accomplished translations, most recently the volume of Mandelstam's poems in collaboration with Clarence Brown.

GREGORY ORR lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan. His first book, *Burning the Empty Nests*, was published by Harper & Row in 1973. His second, *Gathering the Bones Together* will appear from the same publisher this spring.

FRANK STANFORD notes that Mill Mountain Press of Seattle has published some of his poetry in limited editions.

NANCY WILLARD's collection of poems, *Carpenter of the Sun*, was recently issued by Liveright, which also published her collection of stories, *Childhood of the Magician*. A collection of stories for children,

Sailing to Cythera, is just out from Harcourt Brace. She writes that she'll be teaching at Bread Loaf this summer.

ELLEN WITTLINGER has a fellowship from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Mass., where she is finishing a novel.

JOHN WOODS teaches at Western Michigan, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. His new manuscript is titled *Striking the Earth: New Poems*.

By the time this issue appears, CHARLES WRIGHT's new book, *Bloodlines*, should be out from Wesleyan. He has been teaching at Iowa University this year, and plans to return to Irvine next fall. The poems in this issue are part of a projected group of shorter poems called "Quotidiana."

JAMES WRIGHT lives on his farm in New York City.

cher Tai!

Juste un mot de la Dédé pour te faire
savoir ce que Berthoud veut te m'envoyer!
Ton dernier Gaspard!
à tout bientôt!
ton Charles

7 septembre